

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 SSM-03 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05
H-01 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15
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O 131413Z MAR 78
FM AMEMBASSY CAIRO
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6598
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
USMISSION SINAI
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV IMMEDIATE

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CORRECTED COPY (TEXT)

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: EG IS PINS
SUBJECT: EGYPTIAN REACTION TO TERRORIST RAID

REF: CAIRO 8046

SUMMARY: MARCH 13 PRESS COVERS FEDAYEEN RAID PROMINENTLY
BUT WITHOUT PRAISE OR CONDEMNATION. EDITORIALS SAY RAID
CHALLENGES ISRAELI SECURITY THEORIES AND DRAMATIZES
PALESTINIAN ISSUE AS CORE OF PROBLEM. AHRAM PUTS RES-
PONSIBILITY ON BEGIN'S POLICY OF OVERLOOKING FACTS
INHERENT IN CONFLICT. PRIVATELY, EGYPTIANS CONDEMN
LOSS OF LIFE AND VIEW RAID AS SERIOUS PERHAPS FATAL
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BLOW TO SADAT'S PEACE INITIATIVE. "FATAH HAS NOW MADE
BEGIN'S JOB EASY" IN U.S. IS ANOTHER TYPICAL COMMENT.
ALTHOUGH IT CLEARLY RECOGNIZED HERE THAT RAID DESIGNED
TO OBSTRUCT PEACE PROCESS, EGYPTIANS APPARENTLY FEEL
POWERLESS TO PREVENT IT FROM DOING JUST THAT. END SUMMARY.

1. PRESS MARCH 13 PROMINANTLY COVERS PALESTINIAN RAID

IN RELATIVELY NEUTRAL MANNER. ONLY AKHBAR BANNERS STORY SAYING 38 KILLED AND 82 WOUNDED. ALL PAPERS FEATURED PICTURE OF DESTROYED BUS. NO CONDEMNATORY ADJECTIVES USED, NOR IS RAID PRAISED.

2. EDITORIALS. AKHBAR NOTES THAT NO PEOPLE CAN LIVE SECURELY BY USURPING RIGHTS OF OTHERS. RAID CHALLENGES ISRAELI THEORIES OF SECURITY. HOWEVER VIOLENT RETALIATION BY ISRAEL MAY BE, PAPER SAYS, NO PEACE CAN BE ACHIEVED WITHOUT SOLVING CORE OF PROBLEM. LOGICAL STARTING POINT OUT OF VICIOUS CIRCLE OF RETALIATION IS CHANGE IN ISRAELI CONCEPT OF SECURITY, WHICH NOW BASED ON DENIAL OF PALESTINIAN PEOPLE'S RIGHTS AND OCCUPATION OF WEST BANK AND GAZA. AL GUMHURIYYA PLAYS SAME THEME. IT CITES WEIZMAN STATEMENT THAT IT WOULD BE IMPOSSIBLE TO PROTECT ISRAEL'S BORDERS AGAINST SUCH RAIDS AND SAYS THIS STATEMENT UNDERMINES ISRAELI CLAIMS REGARDING SECURE BORDERS AND SETTLEMENTS. EDITORIAL ALSO NOTES THAT PRESIDENT CARTER SAID RAID UNDERLINES NECESSITY OF ACHIEVING PERMANENT PEACE IN ME. AHRAM EDITOR ALI HAMDI AL GAMAL MAKES SAME LINK BETWEEN ISRAEL'S SECURITY AND PALESTINIAN PROBLEM AND PREDICTS FEDAYEEN ACTIONS WILL DISAPPEAR IF PALESTINIANS REGAIN THEIR RIGHTS. GAMAL PUTS RESPONSIBILITY FOR LOSSES OF LIFE IN TERRORIST OPERATION SQUARELY ON BEGIN FOR HIS POLICY WHICH "TRIES TO OVERLOOK THE FACTS INHERENT IN THE ARAB-ISRAELI CON-

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FLICT."

3. PRIVATELY, GOE OFFICIALS AND INTELLECTUALS HAVE AMBIVALENT FEELINGS ABOUT RAID. ON ONE HAND, THEY CONDEMN LOSS OF INNOCENT LIVES AND VIEW IT AS A SERIOUS, PERHAPS FATAL BLOW TO SADAT'S PEACE INITIATIVE. MOST BELIEVE RAID OBVIOUSLY TIMED TO COINCIDE WITH BEGIN VISIT TO U.S. WHICH WAS BEING VIEWED HERE AS CRUCIAL SHOWDOWN. AS ONE SENIOR OFFICIAL REMARKED, "FATAH HAS NOW MADE BEGIN'S JOB EASY." THEY FULLY EXPECT BEGIN TO EXPLOIT TO HILT PROPAGANDA VALUE OF TRAGEDY WITH U.S. PUBLIC AND TO GET ALL SUPPORT HE NEEDS FROM U.S. AN AHRAM EDITOR PREDICTED THAT EGYPT WOULD NOT NOW GET F-5E'S. ON OTHER HAND, SAME PERSONS WHO DEPLORE ATTACK ON HUMANITARIAN AND POLITICAL GROUNDS, INSIST THAT IT DEMONSTRATES NECESSITY OF PALESTINIANS BEING INCLUDED IN SETTLEMENT AND FALLACIOUSNESS OF ISRAELI QUEST FOR TOTAL SECURITY. THEY ALSO EXPRESS SYMPATHETIC UNDERSTANDING OF DESPERATION THAT DRIVES PALESTINIANS TO ENGAGE IN TERRORISM AND PARTIALLY JUSTIFY IT BY ACCUSING ISRAELIS OF HAVING ENGAGED IN EQUIALLY REPREHENSIBLE "TERRORIST" ACTIONS SUCH AS MASSIVE REPRISAL RAIDS

WHICH RESULTED IN CIVILIAN CASUALTIES.

4. COMMENT: IN SHORT, KNOWLEDGEABLE EGYPTIANS BELIEVE BIG LOSER WAS SADAT'S PEACE INITIATIVE AND WINNERS WERE THOSE OPPOSED TO PEACEFUL SETTLEMENT, A CATEGORY IN WHICH MOST EGYPTIANS WOULD PUT MR. BEGIN. ALTHOUGH IT CLEARLY RECOGNIZED HERE THAT PURPOSE OF RAID WAS TO HINDER PEACE PROCESS BY CREATING BITTER REACTIONS THAT, IN FACT, HAVE EMERGED, EGYPTIANS FEEL POWERLESS TO DO ANYTHING ABOUT IT. EILTS

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